

VZCZCXRO2470  
PP RUEHROV  
DE RUEHKH #2036 2400836  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 280836Z AUG 06  
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4307  
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 002036

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [UN](#) [UG](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: LRA Talks: Workshops and then the Real Work

Ref: Khartoum 1978 and previous

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Over the past week, the two delegations in the talks between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government of Uganda have been presenting their new position papers and having workshops on various aspects of the talks. Once all the position papers are presented, likely by the end of the week, the mediation team will make compromise documents based on the papers. While the LRA has requested that a South African delegation join the talks, their participation is unlikely at this phase according to a high ranking UN diplomat from South Africa who is in Juba to meet with the parties. An observer from UN OCHA also commented that the visits from northern Uganda ethnic, civil and government leaders was very productive. END SUMMARY.

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Workshops Propel, Focus Talks  
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¶2. (U) Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Vice President Riak Machar, who is the lead mediator for the talks, invited three speakers on successive days this week to hold workshops on ceasefire modalities, the conditions and needs of the people of northern Uganda, and the International Criminal Court (ICC). The speaker on ceasefire modalities, a legal expert provided by UNMIS, explained the difference between a cessation of hostilities and a true ceasefire and how each can be accomplished. The LRA delegation was reportedly pleased with this presentation because it has been asking for a cessation of hostilities before a ceasefire, while the Ugandan Government had been basically using the terms interchangeably.

¶3. (U) The workshop held on the situation in northern Uganda and the needs of its people was basically aimed at grounding the LRA negotiating team, most of whom have lived overseas for many years. The final speaker, a lawyer from London specializing in the ICC, attracted the most interest. The lawyer explained how the Acholi traditions and the laws of Uganda could be applied in a way that would satisfy the ICC. He cautioned, however, that the ICC would most likely only accept a solution whose goal was justice, and not a response crafted specifically to appease the ICC.

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The UN Takes a Closer Look  
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¶4. (SBU) The UN also sent one of its senior diplomats, Welile Nhalpo, Director of the Africa I Division, to meet with the parties and report back to New York. Nhalpo, who is from South Africa, told the Acting Consul General (A/CG) that he believes the South Africans will not get involved in the talks at this late stage unless there is a reason the LRA is unhappy with their current mediators. LRA Deputy Commander Vincent Otti reportedly made the request to the South African Ambassador in Kampala, by phone and in writing, but did not articulate any specific problems with the current process. Nhalpo suspects it is because they are distrustful of the insistence that Otti go to Juba, and are unhappy that the GoSS has asked that they identify their numbers and proceed to rally points. Nhalpo commented that the LRA has still not adjusted to Machar's shift from

a host trying to bring them to the table to a mediator seeking an agreement from both sides.

15. (SBU) An observer from UN OCHA said that the Ugandan Government presented all of its papers last week, while the LRA was lagging behind but would be done this week. The observer felt that the talks benefited from the recent visit from Acholi elders, civil and religious leaders of northern Uganda, and members of the Ugandan Government including members of parliament. The delegation's mission was to help the LRA focus more on the needs of the north. However, the group also reportedly learned a lot that they would bring back to their people and their government to secure wide support for the negotiations and to ensure that any agreement is supported by Uganda and backed up by the Ugandan legislature. In response to a question from the A/CG, the UN OCHA observer commented that all sides, observers, mediators and participants, were focused on making sure any agreement is just and meets the demands of the LRA without supporting impunity. The UN OCHA observer also agreed that the lack of a solid connection to LRA leadership was a hindrance but that it will be addressed at some point. Newspapers have reported direct talks between the Ugandan delegation and Otii over the phone within the framework of the negotiations.

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